

The State of the Yolo Bypass

December 2006



Presented To
The Yolo Bypass
Working Group

Prepared By:
The Yolo Basin
Foundation

Introduction

The Yolo Bypass Working Group (Working Group) is the primary stakeholder organization for the Yolo Bypass (Bypass). It has been sponsored and managed since 1998 by the Yolo Basin Foundation (Foundation) with generous and continuous financial support from CALFED Bay-Delta Program, Watershed Stewardship Grants. The Working Group provides all parties interested in the Bypass an opportunity to meet, discuss, and learn about Bypass conditions and events.

Every year, the Working Group receives updates on numerous topics related to the Bypass. This document is a partial summary of key items discussed between the beginning of 2005 through the end of 2006.

Key Items

Yolo Bypass Interagency Working Group

The Yolo Bypass Interagency Working Group is made up of :

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Department of Fish and Game, and
- Department of Water Resources.

The mission of the group is to improve conditions for native fish in the Yolo Bypass while keeping users of the Yolo Bypass whole by maintaining or improving existing conditions. The group is focused on achieving common goals while addressing their respective agency and legal missions. The group has identified five potential opportunities that could be pursued in the context of a range of key issues including agricultural operations, flood control, educational activities, public and private waterfowl management operations, water quality, Yolo Wildlife Area infrastructure investments, Wildlife Area management operations, recreation, vector control, and benefits to fish. The five opportunities are: There are five potential opportunities: Putah Creek realignments, Lisbon Weir improvements, additional multi-species habitat, Tule Canal/Toe Drain improvements, and improved fish passage facilities at the Fremont Weir.

Putah Creek Realignment –stream realignment, floodplain restoration and fish passage improvement with potential benefits for agriculture through improved water management opportunities and elimination of some nuisance flooding.

Lisbon Weir – modify or replace the weir to benefit fish passage, wildlife, and agriculture, and reduce maintenance and operation..

Multi-species habitat development - identify areas of opportunity on public and private lands where cooperative, willing agreements for habitat development can provide mutual benefits.

Tule Canal / Toe Drain connectivity - reduce blockages in the Canal / Drain as a means to improve fish passage while ensuring continued agricultural and managed wetland water diversion capability and land management related access.

Multi species fish passage structure at Fremont Weir - improve fish passage at the Fremont Weir and evaluate the feasibility of constructing a new fish passage structure operated to ensure continued flood conveyance capacity, no substantial changes in timing, volume, and/or duration flow with minimal disturbance to existing land use and agricultural practices.

The group continues to meet and has pledged to continue focused involvement with Bypass stakeholders as projects are further refined and potentially pursued. For more information, contact Marianne Kirkland, Department of Water Resources, Marianne@water.ca.gov, 916-651-0183, or James Navicky, Department of Fish and Game, jnavicky@dfg.ca.gov, 916-358-2926

Colusa Basin Drain Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate options to Colusa Basin Drain (Drain) discharges into the Sacramento River. The study was paid for by a group of regional and urban interests including (but not limited to) Metropolitan Water District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Santa Clara, Solano County Water Agency, Ducks Unlimited, Northern California Water Association, and the California Rice Commission. These organizations comprise the Drain Study Steering Committee. The Steering Committee directed a renewed look at the Colusa Basin Drain to determine if there are future management options of value for the regional and downstream interests (i.e. water supply, water quality, fisheries, and flood protection) that would lead to a project benefiting the entire region. The initial study was primarily a data collection exercise to better understand current water quality conditions in the Drain. The Steering Committee determined in Summer 2005 to pursue a Phase 2 that was intended produce a *Pre-Feasibility Report* defining alternatives in a manner that would allow for a detailed and meaningful consideration of potential benefits and impacts of various reuse alternatives. The Phase 2 effort was expected to include the following information:

- Potential interested partners
- Facilities such as canals, fish screens, and diversion structures that would be required to implement the alternative
- Potential benefits
- Potential risks/impacts/uncertainties
- Water demand (timing and magnitude, flexibility, quality)
- Institutional considerations
- Preliminary cost estimates
- "Next steps" recommendations
- Opportunities for funding to implement each alternative

The Steering Committee eventually decided not to proceed with Phase 2 in 2006. It remains uncertain if further study work on the Drain will take place. For more information, contact Dave Guy of the Northern California Water Association. dguy@norcalwater.org, 916-442-8333, or

Yolo County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan

The Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) is being lead by the Water Resources Association of Yolo County (WRA); a consortium of entities authorized to provide a regional forum to coordinate and facilitate solutions to water issues in Yolo County. The WRA is governed by a Board of Directors who represent each of the member agencies. The WRA member agencies include:

- City of Davis
- Dunnigan Water District
- Reclamation District 2035
- University of California in Davis
- City of West Sacramento
- City of Woodland
- City of Winters
- Yolo County
- Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District

The IRWMP was released in public draft in October 2006 and was available for public comment through November 21, 2006. A principal feature of the IRWMP is WRA's creation of "integration partnerships" representing the eight, geographic-specific "integrated projects" throughout the County (e.g. Putah Creek, Yolo Bypass, Dunnigan Hills). These partnerships were created to reflect and respect existing stakeholder activities in respective geographic areas. The Yolo Bypass Working Group was approached by the WRA to see if a focused, IRWMP-specific group of stakeholders could be convened to support future prioritization and implementation of the Yolo Bypass Integrated Project. As the long-standing facilitator of the Working Group, the Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP) prepared a proposal describing how a Working Group subcommittee could be formed and operate to address IRWMP topics. A focused discussion of this proposal took place on November 28, 2006 with a representative cross section of the Working Group. CCP's proposal was unanimously supported by the agency, private, and advocacy group stakeholders present. The subcommittee is expected to be convened in early 2007 and will work directly with the full Working Group in the next three years to review, discuss, and prioritize proposed actions in the Bypass.

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board – Ag Waiver Program

The Regional Board continues to pursue water quality improvements and voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices through the Agricultural Waiver process of the Board's Irrigated Lands Program. The Board has supported the creation of several "watershed coalitions" throughout the Central Valley as a means to allow groups of agricultural land owners and irrigators to work together to address water quality concerns, rather than function as independent entities. The watershed coalition approach is supported by a number of key organizations as a best approach to comply with the Board's expectations while also

protecting the interests of land managers / water users. The Board has set a deadline of December 31, 2006 for all irrigators to join a watershed coalition or otherwise comply with Board stipulations as an independent land owner / irrigator. If an irrigator does not comply as an independent party or join a coalition by that date, they are subject to a significant fine. The coalitions addressing Yolo Bypass interests have aggressively communicated with land owners in their geographic boundaries in an attempt to ensure full participation by irrigators. The coalitions will continue to do so through the target date but after that milestone, individual landowners and irrigators may receive the aforementioned fines. For more information, contact John Curry, Dixon Resource Conservation District, 707-678-1655 #105, john.curry@ca.nacdn.net or Dave Guy of the Northern California Water Association, dguy@norcalwater.org , 916-442-8333,

Fremont Weir Sediment Removal Project and Bypass Levee Maintenance

In the summer of 2006, the Department of Water Resources pursued sediment removal activities immediately downstream of the Fremont Weir. The last sediment removal below the Fremont Weir was done in 1992. The work was focused on the west side of the Weir where sediment had accumulated up to 3 feet deep in some places. The work took place through late summer and early fall 2006 and is believed to have moved approximately 800,000 cubic yard of material. For more information, contact Michelle Ng, Department of Water Resources, 916- 574-2605, mng@water.ca.gov.

Yolo Bypass Datum Adjustment

The Yolo Bypass datum was changed on October 1, 2006 to be consistent with a single point of reference throughout the United States (NBVE 1988). The monitor stage and flood stage will drop by 1 foot. There is not a change occurring north of Bryte. Gages have been recalibrating so water elevations will be the same but the number will be different. Historical data will be at old values so conversion factors will be needed to compare old and new data. The Rio Vista stage will also be revised. For more information contact: Cindy Matthews, National Weather Service. 916-979-3041 #334. cindy.matthews@noaa.gov.

The Lower Yolo Bypass Collaborative Stakeholder Planning Process

A focused, multi-party collaborative negotiation will be convened to address Lower Yolo Bypass issues (Liberty Island, Little Holland Tract, Prospect Island, Ryer Island, Egbert Tract, Rio Vista, and related areas). The process will be funded by the Department of Fish and Game and co-sponsored by the Foundation and the Delta Protection Commission (DPC). The process will be facilitated by CCP. The anticipated goal and product is a comprehensive management strategy on how to address and resolve long-standing land and water management constraints in the Lower Bypass that have resulted from levee failures, and inconsistent land management activities and associated roles and responsibilities. The process is expected to include approximately 35 representative stakeholders working together in a structured collaborative

negotiation. The process will utilize the Working Group and DPC meetings as a primary venue for public input and participation. For more information, contact Robin Kulakow, Foundation, 530-756-7248, robin@yolobasin.org, Linda Fiack, DPC, 916-776-2292, lindapc@citlink.net, or Dave Ceppos, Center for Collaborative Policy, 916-341-3336, dceppos@ccp.csus.edu.

Mercury

There are concerns about the levels of methylmercury that have been found in the Yolo Bypass. Currently there are multiple studies underway to define the problem and develop a management solution. As results become available they will be presented to the Working Group.